"MOVING" IN THE COUNTRY.

BY A VILLAGER.

THERE was a great sensation at Elmvale when it was noised through the village that the Bartons had "sold out." Who would have thought of their quitting the old homestead which had been in the possession of the family for the unheard-of length of forty years? It *was* odd, indeed, that such fixtures as they were supposed to be could possibly think of "moving." If the lovely stream which flows along just south of the village—that river whose romantic windings could scarcely be made more interesting even by the glowing verse in which they have been immortalized by the sweetest bard of modern times—had, of its own accord, changed its course, and, making a channel through the intervening meadows, run up the principal street, there might have been more astonishment; but nothing among the bare possibilities of life had seemed so unlikely to occur as for the Bartons to sell. Amid all the wonder caused by this event, the universal opinion was that they had made an excellent bargain—in fact, had done uncommonly well.

But you shall hear all about it. The way they came to sell was this: The Bartons are an *old family*, by which I do not mean that they are any better than their neighbors, or have a longer string of ancestors—for they never tried to trace their descent beyond the days of Queen Bess; but what constitutes their antiquity shall appear as we proceed. At the period of the remarkable selling out, the family consisted of three maiden sisters and a niece of seventeen, whom they had reared from babyhood. The marriage of her mother, the sole one of them all who had achieved matrimony, was the great epoch in their modern history. This or that event took place before or after "poor Sarah's wedding." She, the fairest of them all, died just as life's prospects grew brightest, leaving the infant Sarah to the care of her aunts, from whom her father, with a second wife and large troop of children, had never cared to separate her. A humdrum sort of household it would have been if the young girl had not dwelt with them—a genuine sunbeam in that musty old place.

It was a rambling, tumble-down house, full of great echoing rooms and dark passages, built at different eras and for various purposes. An aspiring two-story front had been the hotel of the early days of the settlement; then a wing had been added for a "store;" and, finally, the Bartons filled up a large angle with some snug family apartments. This mossy-shingled, weather-beaten domicile, shaded by magnificent elms older than itself, comprehended nearly the whole of the inheritance left the spinster sisters by their father. Time rolled on—and, as his ravages were not repaired, the old house grew more ruinous year by year. Rats gnawed great holes in the cellar walls, and ate the spinster's winter apples and potatoes; the roof grew sadly treacherous, and admitted the intruder, rain. Often, in the stillness of the night, a crash would be heard which scared the youthful Sarah, but which her aunts unheeded—for it was only the plastering falling from the chamber ceilings, and they were used to that.

Their brothers, "the boys," as they called them—though one was fifty years old, and the other but a little younger—had long been from home, except for an occasional visit, one being a farmer in Wisconsin, and the other a merchant in a not far-off city.

"Come and live with me," wrote he of Wisconsin to the "girls."

"What! give up our home! And, of all things, to go to the West! No, never!" answered his sisters.

"Sell out and buy a city lot, or all of you come and accept a home with me," urged the generous merchant. But they had as great a dislike to the city as of going westward—and neither invitation was heeded.

"We will decay with the homestead," said the three sisters. "Let us stay in peace where our parents died, where the very walls are old friends, and the portraits look at us from the same places where they have always hung. Let us stay under the shelter of the trees where we played when we were children."

So time rolled on. The spinsters' raven locks showed here and there a silver thread; the old roof leaked more copiously, and more industriously gnawed the rats. Still the Bartons clung to their decaying house, from which they seemed decided that their only removal should be that which laid them in the silent enclosure of the family graveyard, where the parents who fell asleep in a good old age, and the sister in her young beauty, slumbered side by side.

But the march of improvement will do what nothing else can. It made the spinsters "sell out." Elmvale "took a start and grew"—a catastrophe which the Bartons had often contemplated with dread. A new store was built, a manufactory put in operation, a plank road was laid through the very street where they lived, and a locomotive thundered by a dozen times each day, just back of the old dwelling. But what mainly contributed to cause an advantageous sale for the Bartons was the circumstance of a village quarrel. Elmvale, from being a most

quiet and peaceable community, became, by various causes, divided into two factions, the North Enders and South Enders—each party trying to build up the interests of its own quarter to the detriment of the rival neighborhood. The North Enders declared that the opposite side had had all the business in their quarter ever since the settlement of the town, and they "wouldn't have it so" any longer; and, being in the majority, they succeeded in getting the post-office, the railroad depot, and the academy removed and located at the North End. The South Enders, being the wealthiest, revenged themselves by speculating, and, among other things, resolved to have a grand new hotel, which should carry all before it, and make that part of the village famous. It was determined to buy out the Misses Barton, their house was so large and so conveniently situated "on the corner," remodel it entirely, and get an experienced hotel-keeper from the city to take charge of the new establishment.

The spinsters heard of the proposed plan before a formal offer was made them, and they trembled in their shoes. They were denied to all visitors, especially two or three new-comers with black whiskers and driving gay horses, who, so their excited fancies suggested, resembled speculators or fashionable innkeepers. Brother Tim, the merchant, got wind of the matter, and posted over in hot haste to Elmvale.

"Sister Betsey," said he, slapping his fist emphatically on the great dining-table, "are you a sensible woman, as I used to think you were, or are you not? There isn't the least necessity for letting the old house rot down over your heads, though you havn't the means to repair it. Why, just think, they 'll give you four thousand dollars for it—and then, if you are determined still not to come and live with me, you can build a cottage, plenty large enough and much pleasanter than this, on your own lot across the street, for half that sum, and have something left to invest."

Betsey heaved a sigh, looked at the faded paper on the walls and at the grim black mantel-piece with a glance of affection, and remained silent. But her more voluble sisters Ann and Margaret eloquently remonstrated. "Why, brother Tim, it 's home to us, what no other place can ever be. It is a shame to sell it, for its very walls are sacred."

"Sacred!" cried Tim, with a hearty laugh; "and the rats are sacred too, I suppose, for you never kill them; and so is the old plastering that tumbles about your ears. Girls," he continued, more earnestly, "I am fairly out of patience with you. I only ask you to think the matter over, and not reject the offer in a hurry."

Tim loved his sisters, and had their interests at heart; but he had early left the family roof to fight his way, unaided, to a competence, and he could not understand the feeling of mere local attachment, which seemed to be a part of their very natures. However, they were not, after all, unreasonable, nor could they avoid knowing that, in this working-day world, old associations cannot be depended on to furnish food and raiment, or render walls either rat or rain proof. So they followed Tim's advice, and, taking the subject into consideration, made up their minds to sell, being not a little influenced by their affection for Sarah, who thought it would be fine fun to move, and longed for a new house above all things. In short, the bargain was made, the papers drawn up and brought to be signed. The spinsters seldom went beyond the shade of the elm trees, except to church—they had a horror of making new acquaintances, and were especially possessed by a nervous dread of signing a paper. But this ceremony could not, on the present occasion, be dispensed with—so, when the official dignitary came to "take their acknowledgment," though he was an old neighbor of twenty years' standing, they put on long-fronted, antiquated bonnets and great shawls, walked silently into the parlor, and, having affixed their names to the necessary document, hurried away in the same mysterious manner, leaving their mischievous niece giggling behind the sideboard. Well, they were to give possession in three weeks, and it was needful to hire a house till their own should be completed. House-hunting was a queer business for the Misses Barton; but, fortunately, a tenement was soon found almost as large, rather more ruinous, and considerably less comfortable than the old homestead, which the parish minister, having just been turned away, had vacated, and which they hired for six months. It was the only one in the vicinity, among rented dwellings, which they deemed capable of holding their great quantity of household stuff, and it was near the home they were to leave—two good reasons for selecting it.

And now were heard the notes of preparation for moving. The old house had not been the scene of such upturning and confusion since the time of sister Sarah's wedding—nearly twenty years before. Ye dwellers in the city, whom May day witnesses changing your residence of a twelvemonth as a matter of course, and with as much unconcern as you walk from parlor to bedroom—little do ye know of the labors of such a flitting as this! Just think of the old barrels and bottles and other trumpery which fill the cellar, "too good to throw away," and yet not fit to bestow on a beggar; the indescribable and heterogeneous mass which lumbers the garret, and the furniture of all kinds, old and rickety, used and long past using, which crams the remainder of the dwelling—furniture, some portions of which are so massive and seemingly immovable, having occupied the same stations year after year, that the mere attempt to stir it appears futile! Articles long since laid aside were dragged forth from dark closets and dingy corners of the garret.

"What under the sun is this, Aunt Betsey?" said Sarah, hauling after her, down the precarious attic stairs, a strange-looking affair of iron, a great round

pan with a handle six feet long. "For mercy's sake, be careful of it, child," cries Aunt Betsey from the hall, where she is emptying the contents of a book-case into a two-bushel basket; "it 's our old frying-pan." This obsolete utensil had not seen the light since the Bartons were induced, through Tim's arguments fifteen years before, to introduce a cooking-stove into their kitchen, and shut up the great cavernous fireplace, with its crane and pothooks. But they still cherished it, like many other things whose day was past, for the double reason that it was old and associated with the memory of their parents.

"And what 's this?" asked Tim, who had brought a carman from the city to transport their goods, and was directing the important business in hand. He was carrying another incomprehensible thing resembling the frying-pan, but more elaborate in construction, having a carved wooden handle terminating in a capacious brass vessel with a highly ornamented cover of the same metal, on which he played an impromptu tune by banging it up and down.

"Stop that racket, do," said Margaret; "that 's the warming-pan our folks have had these forty years; we wouldn't have anything happen it for the world."

The vocation of warming-pans was no longer held in esteem, modern comforts having superseded the necessity of their use, particularly in brother Tim's opinion—for he very well remembered how, when he came home one bitterly cold January night, they put him to sleep in the large north chamber, with its great fireplace, whence the heat of the blazing wood all rushed up the chimney, and the wind roared down into the room; and how, to prevent his freezing to death, his kind-hearted sisters had brought the warming-pan into requisition; how a mass of bed "fuzz" and feathers adhered to it, and, getting scorched, made a most offensive "smudge;" and how some of the coals were shaken out and set the sheets on fire—and he was so irreverent as to pronounce this utensil a useless thing, advising the girls to convert it into a "soap dipper." Most cruel Tim!

While the garret was yielding its treasures, from the dim lumber-room, where superannuated furniture led an easy life, a cradle was brought to view—not one of your modern willow affairs that lasts only long enough to carry one baby through the rocking period, but a substantial wooden structure, painted red, in which two generations of the Bartons had slept away the first months of their existence, and still sufficiently strong to endure the nursery buffetings of many generations to come. Sarah laughed, and clapped her hands at sight of the old cradle. "Won't it be funny, aunty," she exclaimed, "to see a family of spinsters parading along with a cradle when they move?"

But Tim put it carefully on the cart, for he thought of the gentle mother whose soft eyes had watched over him when he lay there, a helpless infant—and as carefully he bore out the two rocking-chairs, a small and a large one, that had stood so many years beside each other in the little sitting-room, just where their venerable occupants had been accustomed to use them. If Tim had small love for the fast decaying old house, it must be said that the tenderest corner in his heart of hearts was filled with a most reverential regard for the memory of those parents, to whom he had been the best of sons; and more than all his father's worldly possessions he valued his dying father's earnest blessing.

For a whole week, the cart "might be seen," as novelists say, standing at the Bartons' door, or slowly traversing the street to their new abode, now with a mass of feather beds piled alarmingly high—anon creaking under the weight of unwieldy cupboards or antiquated bureaus. Tim objected to the great clumsy presses. "What can you want with all those cupboards, sister Betsey?" he asked. "Why not dispose of them to the new owner here, and save the trouble of moving such heavy things? You can have plenty of clothes-presses and china closets built in your new house, and havn't the least possible use for all these."

But the girls were unanimous in refusing to part with even one. "You don't understand it at all, brother Tim," said they. "This long blue closet is for Sarah's dresses; that cherry one we always keep blankets in; this red one, with so many shelves, always stands in the kitchen; we couldn't live without it; and, as for the others, why, you know they have been in the family ever since mother began housekeeping, so there is no use in saying anything about them."

Tim acquiesced, and made no further propositions of a similar nature. But finally, as one load after another was dispatched, and still "Alps on Alps" of rubbish, the accumulations of many years, were revealed to view, there were some things that even the sisters pronounced "in the way;" among which were two or three casks full of "old iron," the results of kitchen breakages and of the wear and tear of time—cracked kettles, broken skillets, smoothing irons without handles, metal teapots noseless and bottomless, with other articles "too numerous to mention." The Bartons were not what is called "keen at a bargain," and—partly from their knowledge of this deficiency, partly because they inherited from their father, who, though residing in "York State," was far from being Yankee-born, a suspicious dislike of traveling merchants in general and tin peddlers in particular—they seldom indulged in a "trade," and, when they did, had reason to regret it afterwards. But on the present occasion, when the stirrings-up consequent on their expected change of residence brought out such quantities of trash, they became anxious for an opportunity to barter.

"I really think," said sister Betsey, "that, if a peddler should come along, we might venture to trade these things off, for it would be no great matter if

we should get cheated, and even one tin pan will be more useful than all this old stuff."

And it so fell out that just at this juncture a peddler did "come along"—one of those miscellaneous dealers whose cart contains a little of everything in the tinware and drygoods line, from a pepper-box to a blanket shawl, and who in exchange takes articles infinitely more multifarious. His vehicle presented a striking appearance, moving forward to the music of clattering tins, many of which were hung outside, forming an ambulatory advertisement that glittered brilliantly in the sunlight, while, lifting their well-stuffed bodies through various crevices, were visible many plethoric-looking bags, the nature of the contents of which might be guessed by rags thrusting themselves through rents in some, and feathers poking from others. The Bartons hailed his approach with satisfaction; the "old iron" and all the rag-bags in the house were exhibited, and their pecuniary value, when weighed and summed up, was by no means of small amount.

"Well," inquired the peddler, "han't you got anything else you want to get rid of? I 'll take old India rubbers, hens' feathers—no matter what."

Old India rubbers and hens' feathers? Could it be possible that they were salable commodities! How fortunate—for they had half a bushel of worn-out overshoes, and standing in the carriage house were two barrels of hens' feathers, the pickings of the fowlyard for several years, saved there by the spinsters' directions, yet for what purpose saved they themselves hitherto knew not, though doubtless with a vague idea that they would come in use some time or other. These desirable relics were added to the rags and old iron; and now, from the peddler's stock, began the selection of such articles as the Misses Barton wished—several milk-pans, quart and pint cups, water dippers, and things of corresponding nature—and, in particular, a small vessel brilliantly painted in red and green, with the words "molasses cup," by way of inscription, in gilt letters directly under the spout. The drygoods came in for a share of patronage also; a bright handkerchief for William, the serving-man, thread, needles, tape, and cotton hose not only made the traders "even," but brought the ladies a few pennies in debt.

"We 'll soon make that right," said the peddler; "han't you got no eggs? I take eggs too."

Eggs and overshoes, feathers, and broken teapots —funny enough, thought the Bartons—and a dozen of eggs speedily made them "square." Meantime, Sarah, who looked on with much amusement, and was delighted to see how readily the old iron was disposed of, called William to a dark recess under the back stairs, and bade him haul out an immense black pot, a "five pail" vessel at the least, and two antiquated teakettles, minus covers and handles. The man came lugging the pot along with both hands, looking very much like the picture of "Greedy Gut" in Mother Goose's Melodies—while Sarah bore the teakettles. No sooner did the big pot appear on the scene than there was an evident consternation among the sisters, as though the peddler, beholding such rich booty, would take it perforce, and Miss Betsey in haste told William to carry it back directly, for it was once her great-grandfather's, and could not be sold on any account. Sarah laughed slyly, and produced her burden, which her aunts speedily consigned to the state tomb they had so long occupied with the pot; "they were grandmother's and great-grandmother's kettles, and should always be kept in the family."

"That 's right, girls," put in brother Tim; "those things are useful, in a certain sense, as relics of our forefathers; and I approve of such keeping, in fact of keeping most old things, except great cupboards and crazy, leaky houses," he added, with a smile.

The great trade being concluded, it was surprising to see how the peddler stuffed his additional stock into the already crammed wagon. There seemed no end to its capacity of holding. In went the eggs too—and where they were put to escape crushing remains a mystery to the Bartons to this day. To their astonishment and delight, the tinware proved to be, as represented by the peddler, "first-rate and no mistake, and warranted not to leak;" so they have set it down that there is at least one honest peddler in the world. A single circumstance, however, casts a cloud on his reputation. His dealing in hens' feathers was certainly suspicious. "He must either," they believed, "mix them with geese feathers, or steam them up to make them sell for such, and one would be as unfair as the other." Therefore, after canvassing the whole matter, they concluded that, though he did well by them, "there must be cheatery somewhere about him." As for the peddler, he went on his way, and they saw him no more; but he was reported to have said, at his next stopping-place, that "he never made such a great dicker in his life as he did with them women folks in that 'ere old house down street."

To return to the moving—which the peddler's appearance has interrupted. There was one matter which weighed heavily on Miss Betsey's mind, and that was in relation to their domestic fowls, for they had an extensive "hen dairy," as brother Tim called it—and the contemplated task of ousting its members from their convenient quarters and gathering them for removal, presented not only serious difficulties, but its accomplishment appeared prospectively to be attended with considerable risk. A disused smoke-house, the sole appurtenance of their new residence that could be made available for such a purpose, having been prepared for the reception of the fowls, William, the serving-man, set himself to catch them, and after great exertions, secured the fluttering community. They were confined in two large coops, which, being mounted on a wheelbarrow, were trundled off by the captor—the imprisoned birds struggling impotently, while their squallings rose with a

muffled sound through the bars of their temporary cells. Brother Tim walked on one side, wholly engaged in steadying the precarious load—an air of intense earnestness pervading his entire man. Miss Betsey's apprehensions were not ill founded, for several of the hens began directly to pine away, and came to an untimely death, a few days after removal, from being pinched and roughly handled by William in his eagerness to catch them—which broke their hearts; an interesting fact—going to show that hens, like other bipeds, sometimes die of broken hearts. And their surviving companions, that had before moving made arrangements "to set," mostly relinquished the idea in the novelty of their abode, so that the Bartons "raised" but two chickens the ensuing summer. This was the only serious disaster that attended the moving, which was signalized by no broken crockery or cracked mirrors, The spinsters themselves went to and fro, carrying small baskets containing their choice China and glass ware, which they would trust to no other hands. And, with their own individual eyes, they steadily watched the transit of the old-fashioned looking-glasses—those time-honored bequests of their great-grandfather—long and narrow, and encased in dark frames, where dim gilding and carved wood flourished antiquely together.

Whatever sad thoughts and tender memories connected with the home they were about to quit rose in the minds of the sisters, there was little opportunity for indulging or expressing them, when fairly engaged in the perplexing tasks in which the final tearing-up and constant supervision of departing goods and chattels involved them. But at times, when by themselves, and busied in the old rooms, as they sorrowfully realized, for the last time, they would give way to the indulgence of childish reminiscences. "Oh, sister Maggie," said Ann, on such an occasion, as on her knees, hammer in hand, she was taking nails from the carpet of the apartment which had been their nursery and playroom in the far-away period of childhood, "do you remember our 'acting' in this dear old place—how you and I used to stand in that corner and make up plays as we went along?"

"Indeed I do," said Maggie, as she folded the ancient and somewhat faded window curtains of green moreen; "and just how we always ended off too—one going out at the hall door here, and the other at the kitchen entry, saying '*exeunt omnes*' as we went." Then they laughed and cried together—though the tears predominated.

"And this," continued Maggie, as she reached, in the employment of taking down curtains, an "end window," which afforded a view far along the pleasant street, "this is where sister Sarah used to sit and watch for Julius in the summer evenings, before the fall when they were married;" and Maggie sighed at the recollection of those bright, mirthful-looking eyes, that closed so early on all their possessor loved in this world. Then came the often-recurring thought of those parents whose earthly cares and exertions for their children this enclosure of home had witnessed through their course and to their termination; but over the hidden, cherished recollections of the dead—those memories so often filled with "bitterness" which alone "the heart knoweth"—we draw a veil.

Well, the last day of their stay in the house no longer theirs arrived, though they would willingly have deferred it, and "kept moving" another week. Even Sarah arose that morning with a load at her heart, and their breakfast was a sad and silent meal. There remained but the cooking-stove and the bedsteads which they occupied to be taken down, and this was speedily accomplished; then they made ready to depart—lingering a few minutes to take a last look at the familiar rooms. It was one of those chilling, bleak days which so often come in the latter part of May after a period of bright, balmy weather, and dampen our hopes of approaching summer. The wind whistled drearily down the open chimneys, and the rooms, empty of all else, were full of dismal echoes. A few bits of string and pieces of torn paper were scattered on the dusty floors, and on one of the mantels stood some cracked vials—and this was all, where lately had been so much of the warmth and happiness of life. The sisters looked at each other, but did not speak, for they knew the effort would only make their tears burst forth. Small would have been the comfort, then, had any one said "it is wise to leave here—you will be much better off in a new house"—which, indeed, they felt to be truth; yet none who quits the home of a lifetime fails to realize the utter fallaciousness of such consolation when the hour of departure is at hand. They would not allow themselves to wait long, but presently passed out in slow procession from the shelter of the old roof-tree, to return no more; Sarah following her aunts with a subdued countenance, carrying a geranium in one arm and the little white house dog in the other. And, by the way, small "Tom," the funniest and most knowing of quadrupeds, and the barn-door fowls did not constitute all the live stock of the Bartons, which also comprehended a cow, a trim Durham of invaluable qualities. Just at the mournful moment when the spinsters issued forth, came William also from the rear of the house, leading "Bossy" by a rope tied to her horn, at which the man vigorously tugged. The cow, not understanding why she was driven from her usual resting place, and not desiring a strange stable or unfamiliar milking ground, pulled as violently in the opposite direction, rolling her eyes and tossing her head in a manner entirely at variance with her naturally submissive ways. There are times when little circumstances, which ordinarily would be unnoticed, seem fraught with peculiar meaning, and such was the present, when the behavior of the cow appeared

very inauspicious. Maggie, always alive to portents, and somewhat superstitious, set it down in her own mind as a bad omen—an ill-defined indication of some equally ill-defined misfortune to result from the "moving"—and, looking back anxiously on reaching the gate of their new residence, she felt relieved to see that "Bossy," though her eyes still glared with the light of suppressed rage, had submitted to her fate, and was advancing in unresisting dignity. "Poor dumb thing!" said Maggie; "I can sympathize with you." As for the ill luck foreshadowed by those ominous shakings of the head, it is yet to come, thank Heaven!

Tim stood waiting to receive his sisters, having seen that one room at least was made comfortable for their induction. He wiped some tears which rushed unbidden to his eyes as they approached, for he did not like that they should see him giving way so, and welcomed them in a hearty voice. They had need to be met with smiles, for all but this one room, where the old family clock stood ticking away so homelike in one corner as to give the place a natural aspect, looked unpromising enough. The carpets had been put down, and, so far, all was well; but everything besides was pitched in helter-skelter. And what a place the kitchen was! for it had been made the receptacle of whatever could not be stowed anywhere else—a pyramid of chairs and tables in the centre, and the doors blocked up with all sorts of things—parlor, kitchen, and bedroom furniture in most admirable juxtaposition. Not only did the idea of having anything to eat that day seem preposterous, but to the sisters so faint was the prospect of ever "getting settled" at all, so unused were they to the discomforts of "moving," that they were thrown into a state of absolute despair. Maggie seated herself on an inverted wash-tub and began to cry outright, partly at the dismal scene before her, and partly because the tears which she had been choking down all the morning could be kept back no longer. Good brother Tim busied himself in flying about, giving directions, and trying to compose "the girls"—while Sarah, who was too buoyant to be long weighed down, was not inactive; so, through their cheering influence, the others gathered resolution to do what all who feel despair under similar, or indeed any circumstances, had best do—bestir themselves.

Before dark, a passage having been cleared to the cooking-stove, and a good fire kindled, the teakettle began to sing, announcing that a meal was in prospect; and what can make people feel so at-home-like as sitting down to a cosy cup of tea? The table was set, though, truth to say, there was little on it, for nobody knew where anything was to be found in either the crockery or eatable line; but Miss Betsey had taken care to send for a loaf of "baker's bread" (home-baking had been out of the question in the confusion of the last week), and they were sure of a refreshing draught of tea, for Ann had brought the caddy in her own hands. Alas for human expectations! When the tea was tasted, no one could drink it; in fact, it was not "tay-tay," as the Irishman called the real China product, but an undisguised decoction of spearmint leaves, which Miss Betsey, who was famous for curing herbs, had dried the previous fall, having heard they were "good for some complaint," she didn't know what, and which had, in the turmoil of moving, got into the "wrong box"—in what way, the Bartons cannot tell to this day. They were in great tribulation, as they saw no remedy, and particularly on Tim's account, he so relished a good cup of tea—but Tim, sympathizing with the perplexity into which he saw their novel surroundings had thrown them, protested that it was quite drinkable, kindly following up the assertion by swallowing a cupful—an effort it cost him too, for the stuff was villanous. Considerate Tim! Then he bade them an affectionate good-by, and, springing into his buggy, drove off very fast towards town. What made him check his horse at the gate of the deserted homestead?—and did anybody hear footsteps in the lonely house that evening? Surely, there stood a man under one of the elms and leaned his head against the rough bark, as night threw its shadows over the silent spot. Tim never told his sisters that he stopped there that evening; but he said to his wife, "I didn't think I should feel so bad as I really did at last." They have not re-entered the old house, and most probably never will.

The spearmint tea was but the first of many similar trials and mistakes which attended the Misses Barton's efforts at "getting settled." Not the least of their troubles arose from the awkwardness accompanying the explorations of a strange abode—a serious undertaking to people who had spent all their days in one spot. They ran headlong against each other in passages with the windings of which they were totally unacquainted; and many hard bumps were the result. And then, what a fuss they had to find anything! Books, table linen, sweetmeat and pickle jars had been put in most unsystematized array on the same shelves; hunted articles "turned up" in the least expected places; pocket handkerchiefs and dish towels, hastily thrust away, were discovered crammed into pillow cases; and wearing apparel emerged from wooden water pails. By degrees, everything looked for made its appearance, and, as perseverance and industry can smooth the most rugged difficulties, so, in a week's time, matters began to go on with somewhat of their accustomed good order and system.

But, among the consequences of the "selling out," a new trial, and a different one from those which had followed the event hitherto, now awaited the spinsters. It remained for them to be made acquainted, how unwillingly soever, with the total overhauling which took place at their old home. They had been not many days established at their temporary residence when Maggie, who sat near an open window

enjoying the first balmy breath of June, heard a great clatter and crash, and, throwing a glance, as she often did, down the street where the weather-beaten walls of the old house were plainly discernible, she beheld men on the roof, and discovered that the process of demolishing the chimneys was begun. The sound of the falling bricks, as they rattled over the shingles, smote on her ear like a knell; she shut the window, and retreated to her bedroom. But regrets and sighs could not stay the work of reform; every fireplace was removed—"they took up so much space," the new proprietors said. The great vacancies thus made were walled and plastered, while more modern chimneys, to accommodate stovepipes, were constructed. The demolition of the kitchen chimney, which of itself occupied as much room as any moderately-sized apartment, hurt the feelings of the Bartons most of all. That pleasant old corner where they used to sit, a knot of brothers and sisters, when they were children, in the long winter evenings, enjoying the blaze of the immense "back-logs," and listening to their grandfather's funny stories; and the adjoining brick oven, where the Christmas cakes and pies had, ever since they could remember, been baked, and from which not even the innovation of stoves in later years had drawn their patronage, for in its capacious depths their bread was baked to the last—to know that all vestiges of that brick oven and ancient chimney-place were gone, was sorrowful enough. But the change did not end there. The partition walls were torn away, and the very landmarks that distinguished different apartments were entirely destroyed. A staring piazza was built along the front, extending quite to the paternal elms which waved their arms protectingly before the house; and, to crown all, the whole was painted of a dark-brown color.

In due time, the new hotel was opened for the reception of visitors, under magnificent auspices. Brilliant red and embroidered muslin curtains occupied the place of the sober, old-fashioned hangings of the Bartons; where their parlor and dining-room had been was now a long counter, displaying many bottles and decanters; and the windows that looked out from a little western bedroom, which had been a sacred spot where they had closed the eyes of their beloved dead, now lighted a public resort, where men waited for the stage, and which was always full of loungers and cigar smoke. Sarah, who reported progress to her aunts, came in from a walk one day, exclaiming, with an air of disgust, "And what do you think, aunty, I saw at the old place to-day? A horse-pail right at the front door! Just think of it!"

But a new object was rising on the spinsters' vision, to divert their thoughts into a more pleasing channel. From the windows of their present residence they could observe a modest cottage advancing into being, which, in the course of a few months, appeared complete; its walls of cream color prettily contrasting with the young elm and fir trees which embellished the court-yard, and a terraced garden occupying a graceful slope at its eastern end. Thither was the second flitting of the spinsters, when November winds piped loud and shrill, and as they went they blessed kind Providence for such a snug home as awaited them the coming winter. Nor did they neglect to praise brother Tim, whose good taste and judgment had assisted in planning the new house. But now, alas! they were forced to give up some of the cumbrous furniture that had never before seemed to be "in the way," for there was absolutely not space enough for it at the cottage—obtaining in its stead other of more appropriate size. High-post bedsteads it was necessary to curtail of their dimensions, to which fate some were subjected, while others were exchanged for modern ones; even some of the vast cupboards were dispensed with; but there were many other articles with which nothing could induce the Bartons to part, and among these ranks the long mahogany clock. There is one story high enough to accommodate at least that faithful monitor, and it still ticks away in the cottage dining-room as vigorously as it has been doing for the last forty years, while its clarion-like bell rings out the passing hours clearer than ever. The reason of which last improvement is that the Bartons consented, during their final moving, to commit it to the hands of an experienced clockmaker to be cleaned, and, the dust of twenty-five years being brushed away, the husky voice of age has been replaced by the animated notes of its early existence. Miss Betsey says she would rather have it than a dozen French clocks, and would as soon think of selling Sarah, for it is quite as much one of the family. In keeping with its honest face, stand those two ancient rocking-chairs, more prized than the most luxurious of modern seats, as helping, with other articles of furniture no more elegant than these which are disposed about the house, to keep "green the memory" of those who owned and used them once, but who have left behind all earthly possessions.

In fact, the inanimate belongings of the cottage, blending old and new—with more, however, of the former than the latter—may be compared, not unfitly, to its human occupants: the spinster sisters quietly but surely going on in the vale of years, the brightness of their early youth forever passed; and their sprightly niece, on whose round cheek age and care have not yet come to set their lines, and whose golden locks have not been touched by the gray blight of time.

"What a pretty place the Bartons have," say the neighbors; "and what a good bargain they made in getting the cottage for their large, inconvenient old house." While the Bartons, grateful and contented as they are in their new and cheerful abode, look back at times with fond regret even to the discomforts of the homestead, and Miss Betsey has been heard to declare that "it is well we don't know to what we are coming in this world."

Now, kind reader, if it so happen that you belong to the sex masculine, suffer a word of advice. Perhaps you will pause at Elmvale while on a deer-hunting excursion, in the cold winter months, for it lies not far from great hunting-grounds, and you may repose yourself at that famous hotel where the gas lights gleam with such a comfortable air through the crimson-curtained windows. If so, give not way, we beseech you, to boisterous mirth in those gayly-furnished rooms, neither indulge in the potations which those decanters so temptingly display; but remember that the spot you occupy was once the scene of quiet, domestic comfort, of the mingled griefs and joys of home; and that, perchance, on the very spot where you stand the bride assumed her marriage vow, or the dead was laid out for burial. Or, in the warm days of summer, while seeking a refuge from the city heats, you may stumble upon Elmvale; and I am sure you could not find a more charming place, for, notwithstanding the rival factions of North and South Enders have caused scowls and hard words among the inhabitants, yet Nature, undisturbed by man's quarrels, wears here a pleasant aspect, and speaks in sweetest tones from echoing wood and rolling river. On the gently sloping hills at whose base the village nestles, you may wander, finding new views of loveliness at every step, for to their calm, green summits no sound of strife rises, and they smile on in the glancing sunlight as beautifully serene, whether the Academy, justice's and post office be at one end or the other of the broad street below. If from the piazza of that same hotel, as you sit in one of those ease-inviting arm-chairs, enjoying the soft summer twilight and the flavor of your Havana, you note at a little distance the cream-colored cottage with its verdant terraces, we advise you to take a closer view of its beauties. Don't be afraid of the maiden sisters, for they were never known to "set their caps" at any of your race; while, as for Sarah, her aunts think her yet much too young to "have beaux," and the contented country girl divides her time between the little garden and the smaller library of the cottage—so, if you happen to espy her in the first, she will probably retreat to the second, not caring to bestow a look upon yourself. But, if you have the least wish to make a good impression, be careful not to strut, and remember to throw away your cigar on approaching those precincts, for both Sarah and her aunts have a horror of city airs and tobacco.

And here, good reader mine—whom I have carried through a "plotless tale," which yet may not have failed to interest, if you are tired of the heroes and heroines of Broadway and Chestnut Street, and would fain enjoy a whiff of country air, albeit redolent of rusticity and haystacks—we will leave, so please you, the cottage and its inmates. For, as the sisters say most emphatically that "they shall never move again," it is unlikely that anything so eventful as their first flitting will make any part of their future life worthy of record; and certain I am you will join with me in hoping that life will be—what they themselves most wish—quiet and serene, unfretted by anxieties, and yet not so intensely comfortable as to cause forgetfulness of that last narrow home whither all alike are tending.

THE "WRONG PASSENGER."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MISS BREMER'S VISIT TO COOPER'S LANDING," "GETTING INTO SOCIETY," "PLEASING THE PARISH," ETC. ETC.

Mrs. William Augustus Flanders was going to pass a winter at the South.

It was quite an event in the life-history of the lady, a resident of 2 Hancock Court, Boston. It had always troubled her that it was only a court over which she reigned. It was not orthodox, but she would have preferred to govern a street; to be the observed of a place, at the least. Mr. Flanders was particularly obstinate in some few points, one of which was that the house he and his father before him occupied was good enough for his wife and children; nor did it avail that new dwellings, with bow fronts, and "hot water in every story," were unusually cheap at the south end, and that his old partner, Moses Sanborn, occupied one of them. "What Mr. Sanborn chose to do was none of his business," he often pertinently remarked; he had chosen to leave the firm of Flanders & Sanborn because it did not make money fast enough, and, if he chose to live fast, he only hoped he had made enough to pay for it. You might as well have tried to remove Old South as Mr. Flanders, when his foot—no very small one, it is true—was once put down.

However, Mrs. Flanders had always one refuge, into whose impregnable fastness she invariably retreated, under all social attacks. If Mrs. Potts, at No. 4, hired a third maid-servant, she could tell of the two her cousin, Mrs. Jessup, always had about her. If Mrs. Himes bought the first strawberries in market, Mrs. Jessup's last letter had said "green peas were over with them for the present." Mrs. Moses, an assistant officer in the Mite Society, went to pass a few months in New York, and Mrs. Flanders observed, "her duties as a wife and mother had led her to decline at least fifty invitations to pass a winter in Charleston; Anna Maria was always urging her to come out."

Whether it was that her "duties as a wife and